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201746Z Sep 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 001463

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR SLISER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/20/2015

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: LONDON POLICE ARREST BAYELSA GOVERNOR, IJAW YOUTH
THREATEN RETALIATION; ASARI REPORTEDLY ARRESTED

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

Summary

1. (C) The Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) confirmed its cooperation with UK authorities on Bayelsa State Governor Alamieyesiegha's September 15 London arrest in connection with allegations of money laundering. The London Metropolitan police have reportedly released the Governor, but seized his passport to prevent his return to Nigeria, pending his appearance at a November hearing. The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) threatened British oil interests and citizens in the Delta region unless the Governor was allowed to return home. The IYC renewed these threats upon unconfirmed news of the arrest of Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force leader Asari. The British High Commission is advising British citizens and companies operating in the Niger Delta to exercise caution, and he private security firms contracted by petroleum firms are advising vigilance.

Governor Alamieyesiegha's Arrest;
EFCC Worked with London Police on Case

2. (SBU) The Nigerian newspapers devoted their front page to Governor Alamieyesiegha's September 15 London arrest in connection with allegations of money laundering. The Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) noted in a public statement, "The EFCC wishes to state that the commission is fully in the picture of the on-going investigation while it has a close relationship with the Metropolitan Police and other law enforcement agencies around the world." The EFCC also indicated seven London banks accounts have been traced to Alamieyesiegha. Some press reports indicate President Obasanjo is pushing for Alamieyesiegha's trial in London, where he would not enjoy immunity from prosecution, as he does in Nigeria. On September 20, Nigerian media reported President Obasanjo had convened a meeting with the state governors to lecture them on the "consequences of continued involvement in corrupt practices," pointing to its deleterious impact on Nigeria's socio-economic development.

Bayelsa State Financial Officials Targeted, Questioned

3. (SBU) Alamieyesiegha's arrest appears to be the culmination of increased scrutiny of Bayelsa state officials. In the last week, the Bayelsa Finance Commissioner, Accountant-General and Government House accountant, reportedly have been questioned by the EFCC.

IYC Calls Arrest a Conspiracy Between British,
Nigerian Governments to De-Stabilize Ijaws

4. (SBU) Press reports indicate the IYC President, "Comrade" Oyeinfie Jon-Jon called the arrest "a conspiracy"

between the British authorities and Nigerian government and "part of a grand plan to destabilize the Ijaws." The Xinhua News Agency reported receipt of a press release from President Jon-Jon, advising, "the British authorities and their collaborators in the federal government of Nigeria to immediately release our No. 1 citizen, otherwise we cannot continue to guarantee the safety of their investment and citizens in our territories."

Asari Arrest Spurs IYC Reversal; Threats to Brits Back On

15. (C) According to an Ijaw youth leader, in response to the threats made against British interests and citizens in the Delta, police arrested Dokubo Asari, head of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, in Port Harcourt. (Note: We have not confirmed the arrest at this point. End note.) He told us the threats against the British were back in force, as the GON was "not taking them seriously." The youth leader claimed the Ijaw people were now aligned against the GON in any attempts to prosecute Alamiyeseigha, and reiterated threats against the British.

British High Commissioner Responds to Arrest;
Emphasis on Cooperation with Nigerian Authorities

16. (C) British Deputy High Commission Trade Manager Debbie Fern told us the arrest is a "joint operation" between the British and Nigerian Governments. Fern confirmed for us the IYC issued a seven-day ultimatum to release the governor from detention, and a one-month ultimatum to repatriate him to Nigeria. Fern's statements confirm press reports of a statement by High Commissioner Grozeny that the arrest came at the GON's behest.

British HC, Armorgroup, Advise Caution for British Citizens

17. (C) The security manager for the British High Commission is advising British citizens and companies operating in the Niger Delta to exercise caution. The private security firm Armorgroup, which handles security for the British Mission as well as a number of the petroleum companies, is monitoring developments on the ground in Bayelsa. Armorgroup has reported "tension and small protests," but does not expect this to spread beyond Ijaw areas.

Industry Figures Concur on Governor's Reputation for
Graft, Close Connection to Ijaw Youth Groups

18. (C) Many in the public and the petroleum industry would agree that Governor Alamiyeseigha has a reputation - hardly unique among Nigerian governors - for graft. Martin Hutchison, Managing Director of a potential multi-billion investment in Bayelsa State, Brass LNG, told us he has great difficulty meeting with the Governor, as "he only seems to be in the state three days a month - the day before the federal payment hits, the day the payment hits, and the day after, when he divvies it up." Hutchison also reported the industry view is Governor Alamiyeseigha pays enormous sums to the Ijaw youth groups for "protection." Hence, they are incensed at his arrest and consequent threat to their livelihood.

Ijaw Threat Cannot be Ignored

19. (C) It remains a challenge to verify whether the fractious Ijaw youth groups pose an imminent threat to Nigeria's oil producing interests in Bayelsa state. We would concur with a recent press analysis, which noted, "Membership of Ijaw groups that fall under the umbrella of the IYC remains fluid, and the continued proliferation of renegade Ijaw groups in the Niger delta is likely to make it difficult for the security forces to successfully track and monitor their operations."

Comment

10. (C) The arrest of Governor Alamiyeseigha breaks new ground in the anti-corruption battle in Nigeria. However, much of the Nigerian public believes the process is highly politicized, almost exclusively aimed at President Obasanjo's political opponents. Over the long haul, the EFCC must

be seen as a neutral party, investigating both those within the President's circle of support, as well as the Presidential doghouse. Meanwhile, already irascible Ijaw youth groups are agitated more than normal. Unless the EFCC gains ground in its quest to be seen as neutral, it risks failure in its core mission, but also widening the chasm between ethnic groups, and inciting new bouts of violence. Meanwhile, many in the public would give at least a modest nod towards the IYC President Jon-Jon's demand to know why Obasanjo is not investigating his own close associates and children for sleaze.

BROWNE